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**STATE OF HAWAII
CAMPAIGN SPENDING COMMISSION**

235 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET, ROOM 300
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

March 7, 2016

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary

Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Kristin Izumi-Nitao, Executive Director *KIN*
Campaign Spending Commission

SUBJECT: **Testimony on S.B. No. 2445, Relating to Campaign Finance**

Thursday, March 10, 2016
3:15 p.m., Conference Room 325

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill. The Campaign Spending Commission takes no position on this measure.

This bill amends Hawaii Revised Statutes ("HRS") §11-381(a)(3) & (a)(5) by permitting a candidate's charitable donation or scholarship award during the prohibited period (date of filing nomination papers to the date of the general election) once that candidate is duly and legally elected to office during that time period pursuant to HRS §§12-41 or 12-42. The purpose of the prohibited period for donations or scholarships would no longer apply once the candidate is deemed duly elected upon the filing of nomination papers or after the primary election.



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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

THURSDAY, March 10, 2016, 3:15 P.M., CONFERENCE ROOM 325
SB2445 RELATING TO CAMPAIGN FINANCE

TESTIMONY

Beppie Shapiro, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii opposes SB2445, which weakens the restrictions on use of campaign funds.

Contributions to bona fide non-profits with laudable public missions, and awarding of scholarships to students is highly commendable.

Our objection is to the use of campaign funds for these awards. The legitimate use of campaign funds should be to provide communications with the public through media advertisements, mailings listing the candidates qualifications and issue positions, making signs, rallies and meetings, buying tee shirts for active supporters, car expenses, office rent, paid staff, etc.

During an election period, contributions to this type of non-profit organization and awarding of scholarships is prohibited. This bill creates an exemption for candidates who run un-opposed.

Donations of surplus campaign funds is easily construed as a form of vote buying. When a candidate donates instruments to a school band in his district, the favorable publicity buys him/her a lot of good will and gratitude which s/he presumably expects will sway voters in his/her favor.

Even when no votes are needed in the current election cycle, they probably will be in future elections if this incumbent competes for office. It is already very difficult for newcomers to compete with incumbents, and this bill potentially places another finger on the scale favoring certain incumbents.

People who contribute to an election campaign believe they are helping to elect the candidate, not to letting the candidate decide to which charitable organization their dollars should be donated.

The League of Women Voters has as its motto, "Making Democracy Work." Every policy, like keeping our elections fair, adds to the direction we take toward or away from this goal.

We urge you to hold SB 2445.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.